

John McDonnell response to the Government's u-turn on £2 billion NICs rise in the Budget

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor,

responding to the Government's u-turn on its £2 billion NICs rise in the Budget

last week, said:

"This

is a humiliating reversal for the Chancellor forced upon him by Labour's opposition. His authority is now shredded after just one Budget, and he tore up

a manifesto commitment to do it.

"We

welcome the Government's decision to finally listen to Labour's calls made in Jeremy Corbyn's Budget response along with those of business groups like the Federation of Small Businesses to not go ahead with an unfair £2bn tax rise on

low and middle earners. But they should never have been placed in this position

to start with, and now we face yet another Tory Budget only a year on with a blackhole in the billions. In 2015, we had the tax credit shambles. In 2016, we

had Personal Independence Payments reversal. Now in 2017 we have the u-turn on

National Insurance Contributions.

"There will be millions of working people who are now breathing a sigh of relief, but it is the Chancellor who should be holding his breath as this episode throws up urgent questions that he and the Cabinet must now answer.

"Did the

Prime Minister or the rest of the Cabinet, who must have seen the Budget in advance and known this measure was to be implemented, raise their concerns with

the Chancellor before he announced it, worrying millions of families? It was in

the weekend papers before the Budget so they can't say they were unaware it was

to happen.

"This is also the second year we have had a Tory Budget with a black hole in it

worth billions. This is not acceptable. What will he do to fill the shortfall

in a Budget he delivered less than a week ago without pursuing unfair tax increases or further cuts to public services? As the Budget will still see working people £1,400 worse off under the Government.

"On the day the Brexit Secretary has admitted that he hasn't looked into the costs of the Prime Minister's negotiating strategy, this is yet more proof that there is disarray at the top of a government clearly making things up as they go along.

"We need answers from the Chancellor and accountability at the top of government. In no workplace would such practices be allowed to continue, and it should not be allowed from those responsible for the public finances. Labour's new roundtable on self-employment will bring together business organisations, trade unions and self-employed groups to lay out a serious and realistic strategy to provide a fair deal for the self-employed at a time of major labour market changes. We are proud to be the party of working people, small businesses, and the self-employed."

[Green Party: Low unemployment rate masks soaring number of zero hours contracts](#)



Green Party

15 March 2017

The Green Party welcomes the falling unemployment rate but is concerned the figures mask the growing insecurity faced by workers.

According to figures published today, the unemployment rate has fallen to 4.7%, the lowest level in 12 years [1].

However, other statistics also published today reveal 905,000 people are now employed on zero hours contracts, an increase of about 101,000 in a year [2].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“While we welcome news that the unemployment rate has dropped to such a low level, the reality is more people than ever are employed on precarious zero hours contracts. With inflation rising and wage growth stalling, the high employment rate masks the insecurity faced by British families.

“Zero hours contracts are part of a gig economy that facilitates the exploitation of workers and companies are failing to fulfil their moral and legal duty to give their workers secure employment and basic rights.

“In this age of insecurity we should be thinking big about how we build an economy that works for everyone. That’s why the Government should follow the lead of countries like Finland which are investigating the merits of introducing a basic income, to stop people falling into poverty, while providing the choice, security and stability they need.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unemployment-rate-falls-to-lowest-since-2005>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/people-in-employment-on-a-zero-hours-contract-mar-2017>

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[Construction worker seriously injured in wall collapse](#)

A Manchester building contractor and a company owner have appeared in court after a worker was seriously injured on a refurbishment site.

The 53-year-old father of two from Salford was employed as a labourer at the site of a refurbishment project at Manchester One, Portland Street Manchester when the incident occurred on 29 August 2014.

The incident was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and on 9 March 2017 Workspace Design and Build Ltd, the principal contractor for the project, and Paul Harrison former director of Access Flooring Specialist Ltd were prosecuted for serious safety failings.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how two operatives working for Access Flooring Specialist Ltd had started the demolition of a freestanding concrete block wall on the site using a demolition hammer.

One of the men had started to cut into the wall just above the half way point, when the second man took over and continued from the top using step ladders for access. As he did so, the top half of the wall collapsed knocking him from the ladder and landing on top of him.

The injured person suffered fractures to his neck and back and spent three months in hospital following the incident. He has been unable to return to work since.

The HSE investigation found there was no suitable risk assessment in place for the work that was being carried out and the workers had not been provided with suitable work instructions for carrying out this task safely.

In addition to this no checks had been made regarding the injured workers training or experience, he was not provided with a site induction or adequate PPE for the task and the work on site was not being supervised.

Workspace Design and Build Ltd of Manchester One, Portland Street, Manchester pleaded guilty to breach of Regulation 22(1)(a) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and was fined £14,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2972.

Paul Harrison of Kirkfell Drive, Tyldsley, Manchester pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 37 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 relating to his companies' breach of Regulation 13 (2) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and was fined £1300 and ordered to pay costs of £2851

Speaking after the hearing HSE Inspector Laura Moran said: "The risks associated with the demolition of the internal walls at Manchester One were not properly considered and, as a result, there was no safe system of work in place for the operatives to follow.

"Together with a lack of adequate supervision, these failings resulted in one man suffering serious and life changing injuries, which could have been prevented had the work been properly planned and managed."

For more information about working safely at demolition sites visit:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/buildings.htm>

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training, new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement [hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. Further HSE news releases are available at press.hse.gov.uk

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

[It is deeply concerning that millions remain in low paid, insecure work – Debbie Abrahams](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on today's Labour Market Statistics, said:

"We welcome the overall increase in employment, but are deeply concerned that millions remain in low paid, insecure work.

"The Government has also failed to close the employment gap faced by women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups, who are all less likely to be in work.

"Working families face the increasing costs of basic essentials, stagnating wages and the Government slashing social security, leaving families £1,400 a year worse off up to 2020.

"Labour would reverse cuts to in-work support that could see working families lose £2,600 a year, ban the exploitative zero-hours contracts being used on hundreds of thousands of workers, and guarantee a real Living Wage."

[The Government is recklessly talking](#)

up the idea of crashing out of the EU with no deal – Keir Starmer

Keir

Starmer MP, Labour's Shadow Brexit Secretary, responding to David Davis' admission that the Government has not carried out an assessment of the economic impact of leaving the EU without a deal, said:

"The Government is recklessly talking up the idea of crashing out of the EU with no deal. They have repeated the mantra that 'no deal is better than a bad deal'.

"But we now know they have made no assessment of the economic impact of the Prime Minister failing to secure a deal.

"What's clear, from the CBI and others, is that there is no result that would be worse for the British economy than leaving with no deal; no deal would be the worst possible deal. The Government should rule out this dangerous and counter-productive threat before Article 50 is triggered."